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TRUMP, BIDEN CLASH IN BITTER PREZ DEBATE

The first presidential debate in Cleveland, Ohio, on Tuesday was marked by angry interruptions and bitter accusations. Moderated by Fox News anchor Chris Wallace, the debate saw Donald Trump and his rival Joe Biden trade barbs about each other's families. At one point, Biden lost his cool and shouted, "Will you shut up, man? This is so unpresidential," calling him a liar, clown and racist. Trump returned the favour | P12

ADVANI, OTHERS ACQUITTED IN BABRI CONSPIRACY CASE

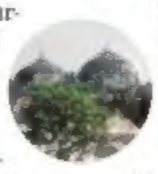
Court finds no plot to demolish structure, claims it was spontaneous; blames anti-socials

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

AN attempt to unravel the conspiracy to demolish the Babri Masjid flew out of the window on Wednesday, as a special CBI court acquitted all 32 accused, including BJP's L K Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Kalyan Singh and Uma Bharti, for want of conclusive evidence.

Rejecting the criminal conspiracy theory, the court observed that the demolition of the 16th century mosque in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992 was spontaneous and not pre-planned.

Reading out the operative portion of the 2,300-page judgement in five minutes, special judge S K Yadav observed that the CBI had failed to produce conclusive and enough corroborative evidence against any of the accused to prove their complicity in the demolition.



Implicating the CBI further, the judge held that the role of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, too, could not be proved by the evidence produced by the prosecution. "Even VHP leader, late Ashok Singhal, was trying to stop kar sevaks from demolishing the disputed structure because the idol of Lord Ram was also inside it," the judge said. He held that the CBI could not establish the role of any of the accused with evidence.

SIGH OF RELIEF FOR SAFFRON LEADERSHIP

Leaders of the saffron fraternity, including (from left) L K Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Sakshi Maharaj, Sadhvi Ritambhara and Vinay Katiyar break into smiles after their acquittal by the trial court. The Opposition, however, called the verdict obnoxious, with the Congress saying it ran counter to the Constitutional spirit

The judge said media reports produced by the prosecution could not be accepted as pieces of evidence, as their original sources were not produced and proved. He said photos related to the incident produced by the prosecution, too, could not be relied upon as their negatives were not submitted, which was mandatory.

He observed that none of the locals testified against any of the accused to prove that they incited the mob to demolish the structure.

"Anti-social elements brought down the structure. The accused leaders tried to stop them," said the judge. Pointing out that audio and video cassettes produced in the court by the prosecution were not sealed and even the videos were not clear, the verdict said they seemed to be fabricated and tampered with.

The court observed that till noon everything was fine in Ayodhya on that fateful day. Then some anti-social elements started brick-batting from behind the Babri structure.

"There is no evidence that the accused tied together in a common cause with anti-social elements to bring down the structure. The leaders seated near the Ram Chabutra did not anticipate that a section of kar sevaks will get agitated and climb the structure," the judge said.

The court also criticised the district administration for failing to act on intelligence reports on the presence of anti-social elements.

Later, prosecution lawyer Lalit Singh said a decision on whether or not to challenge the verdict will be taken at the CBI headquarters in New Delhi after consultations with legal experts. MORE REPORTS ON: P9

BSY, BJP leaders hail verdict; Cong seeks review

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister B S Yediyurappa and other BJP leaders hailed the CBI Special Court's verdict in the Babri Masjid demolition case on Wednesday as a triumph of truth and justice.

"Truth has emerged victorious. I was also part of the movement and I am personally very happy with the verdict. Many people were waiting for it with bated breath. This is the latest example to prove that fighters will always emerge triumphant," said Yediyurappa soon after the verdict. He credited the senior party leaders for their relentless fight. A host of BJP leaders, from state party president Nalin Kumar Kateel to ministers to MLAs, welcomed the verdict.

Congress leader and Rajya Sabha MP Mallikarjun Kharge said it is unfair to say the accused did not have a role to play, despite evidence. Even as KPCC president D K Shivakumar refrained from comment, Congress Legislature Party chief Siddaramaiah called the verdict 'unfortunate'. He insisted the Centre and UP government should appeal before the SC. P4

Police personnel inspect the area after a protest against the state government over the death of a 19-year-old woman who was brutally gang-raped two weeks ago, in UP's Hathras district on Wednesday | PTI

Hathras' Nirbhaya has not died, she has been killed — by a ruthless government, by its administration and by the UP government's ignorance

Sonia Gandhi, Congress chief

Last rites of gang-rape victim at dead of night. What's happening in UP?

NAMITA BAJPAI & SOMRITA GHOSH @ Lucknow / New Delhi

AFTER the horrific brutality that the gang-rape victim from Hathras district in Uttar Pradesh suffered when alive, the 19-year-old was denied dignity even in death by the Uttar Pradesh Police. The Dalit girl, who died at Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital on Tuesday, was forcibly cremated early Wednesday by Hathras police amid their claims to the contrary. As the police action sparked a massive public outrage, the Yogi Adityanath government ordered an SIT probe and vowed that no culprit would be spared.

Following the girl's death, her younger brother and father were made to wait for hours before they could head back to their village Boolgarhi in Hathras. It was around 1 am when the police, along with the body and the family, reached the village. However, the police didn't take the body to the house, her family and villagers said.

The family, including the mother, elder brother and father, said they pleaded with the cops to allow them to take their daughter home before cremating her. But the police "forced" them to complete the last rites immediately.

CONTINUED ON: P10

Students can't visit schools, PU colleges till October 15

PEARL MARIA D'SOUZA @ Bengaluru

THE Karnataka government has decided not to allow students from schools and pre-university colleges to visit their institutes till October 15.

The announcement came just hours before the Ministry of Home Affairs' guidelines to states to consider reopening schools only after October 15.

The MHA, in August, had permitted students of class 9 to 12 to visit their school and clarify doubts from September 21. The state had announced that students will not be allowed to visit schools till September-end. This was met with resentment by private schools who said the government had played foul by starting offline classes for government schools but prohibiting it for private ones.

The Commissioner of Public Instruction said because of Covid, it was decided it would not be safe for students to visit schools. P7

CINEMAS CAN OPEN FROM OCT 15

The Ministry of Home Affairs on Wednesday issued new guidelines for re-opening activities

WHAT IS ALLOWED

Cinemas/ theatres/ multiplexes with 50% capacity	Business to Business exhibitions
SCHOOLS, COLLEGES State / UT governments can take a decision after October 15 in a graded manner	Swimming pools for training of sportspersons
	Entertainment parks and similar places

(For these, detailed guidelines will be issued by the respective ministries later)

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